

# The Poems of Sappho



JOHN MYERS O'HARA

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An Interpretative Rendition into English

*By*

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Who shall strike the wax of mystery from those priceless  
amphoræ, and give to the unsophisticated nostrils of the  
average reader the ravishing bouquet of wine pressed in a  
garden in Mitylene, twenty-five centuries ago?

—MAURICE THOMPSON.

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*T*hen to me so lying awake a vision  
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,  
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I, too,  
Full of the vision,

Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,  
Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled  
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;  
Saw the reluctant

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,  
Looking always, looking with necks reverted  
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder  
Shone Mitylene.

—SWINBURNE.

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Ω θεοί, πῆς ἄρα Κύπρις, ἢ τίς μερος  
τοῦδε ξυνήψατο

—SOPHOCLES.

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# Sapphics



## The Muses

*H*ither now, O Muses, leaving the golden  
House of God unseen in the azure spaces,  
Come and breathe on bosom and brow and kindle  
Song like the sunglow;

Come and lift my shaken soul to the sacred  
Shadow cast by Helicon's rustling forests;  
Sweep on wings of flame from the middle ether,  
Seize and uplift me;

Thrill my heart that throbs with unwonted fervor,  
Chasten mouth and throat with immortal kisses,  
Till I yield on maddening heights the very  
Breath of my body.

## Musagetes

Come with Musagetes, ye Hours and Graces,  
Dance around the team of swans that attend him  
Up Parnassian heights, to his holy temple  
High on the hill-top;

Come, ye Muses, too, from the shades of Pindus,  
Let your songs, that echo on winds of rapture,  
Wake the lyre he tunes to the sweet inspiring  
Sound of your voices.

## Love's Banquet

*I*f Panormus, Cyprus or Paphos hold thee,  
Either home of Gods or the island temple,  
Hark again and come at my invocation,  
Goddess benefic;

Come thou, foam-born Kypris, and pour in dainty  
Cups of amber gold thy delicate nectar,  
Subtly mixed with fire that will swiftly kindle  
Love in our bosoms;

Thus the bowl ambrosial was stirred in Paphos  
For the feast, and taking the burnished ladle,  
Hermes poured the wine for the Gods who lifted  
Reverent beakers;

High they held their goblets and made libation,  
Spilling wine as pledge to the Fates and Hades  
Quaffing deep and binding their hearts to Eros,  
Lauding thy servant.

So to me and my Lesbians round me gathered,  
Each made mine, an amphor of love long tasted,  
Bid us drink, who sigh for thy thrill ecstatic,  
Passion's full goblet;

Grant me this, O Kypris, and on thy altar  
Dawn will see a goat of the breed of Naxos,  
Snowy doves from Cos and the drip of rarest  
Lesbian vintage;

For a regal taste is mine and the glowing  
Zenith-lure and beauty of suns must brighten  
Love for me, that ever upon perfection  
Trembles elusive.

## Moon and Stars

*W*hen the moon at full on the sill of heaven  
Lights her beacon, flooding the earth with silver,  
All the shining stars that about her cluster  
Hide their fair faces;

So when Anactoria's beauty dazzles  
Sight of mine, grown dim with the joy it gives me,  
Gorgo, Atthis, Gyrinno, all the others  
Fade from my vision.

## Ode to Anactoria

*P*eer of Gods to me is the man thy presence  
Crowns with joy; who hears, as he sits beside thee,  
Accents sweet of thy lips the silence breaking,  
With lovely laughter;

Tones that make the heart in my bosom flutter,  
For if I, the space of a moment even,  
Near to thee come, any word I would utter  
Instantly fails me;

Vain my stricken tongue would a whisper fashion,  
Subtly under my skin runs fire ecstatic;  
Straightway mists surge dim to my eyes and leave them  
Reft of their vision;

Echoes ring in my ears; a trembling seizes  
All my body bathed in soft perspiration;  
Pale as grass I grow in my passion's madness,  
Like one insensate;

But must I dare all, since to me unworthy,  
Bliss thy beauty brings that a God might envy;  
Never yet was fervid woman a fairer  
Image of Kypris.

Ah! undying Daughter of God, befriend me!  
Calm my blood that thrills with impending transport;  
Feed my lips the murmur of words to stir her  
Bosom to pity;

Overcome with kisses her faintest protest,  
Melt her mood to mine with amorous touches,  
Till her low assent and her sigh's abandon  
Lure me to rapture.

## The Rose

*I*f it pleased the whim of Zeus in an idle  
Hour to choose a king for the flowers, he surely  
Would have crowned the rose for its regal beauty,  
Deeming it peerless;

By its grace is valley and hill embellished,  
Earth is made a shrine for the lover's ardor;  
Dear it is to flowers as the charm of lovely  
Eyes are to mortals;

Joy and pride of plants, and the garden's glory,  
Beauty's blush it brings to the cheek of meadows;  
Draining fire and dew from the dawn for rarest  
Color and odor;

Softly breathed, its scent is a plea for passion,  
When it blooms to welcome the kiss of Kypris;  
Sheathed in fragrant leaves its tremulous petals  
Laugh in the zephyr.

## Ode to Aphrodite

Aphrodite, subtle of soul and deathless,  
Daughter of God, weaver of wiles, I pray thee  
Neither with care, dread Mistress, nor with  
anguish,  
Slay thou my spirit!

But in pity hasten, come now if ever  
From afar of old when my voice implored thee,  
Thou hast deigned to listen, leaving the golden  
House of thy father

With thy chariot yoked; and with doves that drew thee,  
Fair and fleet around the dark earth from heaven,  
Dipping vibrant wings down the azure distance,  
Through the mid-ether;

Very swift they came; and thou, gracious Vision,  
Leaned with face that smiled in immortal beauty,  
Leaned to me and asked, "What misfortune threatened?  
Why I had called thee?"

"What my frenzied heart craved in utter yearning,  
Whom its wild desire would persuade to passion?  
What disdainful charms, madly worshipped, slight thee?  
Who wrongs thee, Sappho?"

"She that fain would fly, she shall quickly follow,  
She that now rejects, yet with gifts shall woo thee,  
She that heeds thee not, soon shall love to madness,  
Love thee, the loth one!"

Come to me now thus, Goddess, and release me  
From distress and pain; and all my distracted  
Heart would seek, do thou, once again fulfilling,  
Still be my ally!

## Summer

*S*ummer streams from quivering leaves that listless  
Bask in heat and stillness of Lesbian summer;  
Breathless swoons the air with the apple-blossoms'  
Delicate odor;

From the shade of branches that droop and cover  
Shallow trenches winding about the orchard,  
Restful comes, and cool to the sense, the flowing  
Murmur of water.



## The Garden of the Nymphs

All around through the apple boughs in blossom  
Murmur cool the breezes of early summer,  
And from leaves that quiver above me gently  
Slumber is shaken;

Glades of poppies swoon in the drowsy languor,  
Dreaming roses bend, and the oleanders  
Bask and nod to drone of bees in the silent  
Fervor of noontide;

Myrtle coverts hedging the open vista,  
Dear to nightly frolic of Nymph and Satyr,  
Yield a mossy bed for the brown and weary  
Limbs of the shepherd.

Echo ever wafts through the drooping frondage,  
Ceaseless silver murmur of water falling  
In the grotto cool of the Nymphs, the sacred  
Haunt of Immortals;

Down the sides of rocks that are gray and lichened  
Trickle tiny rills, whose expectant tinkle  
Drips with gurgle hushed in the clear glimmering  
Depths of the basin.

Fair on royal couches of leaves recumbent,  
Interspersed with languor of waxen lilies,  
Lotus flowers empurple the pool whose edge is  
Cushioned with mosses;

Here recline the Nymphs at the hour of twilight,  
Back in shadows dim of the cave, their golden  
Sea-green eyes half lidded, up to their supple  
Waists in the water.

Sheltered once by ferns I espied them binding  
Tresses long, the tint of lilac and orange;  
Just beyond the shimmer of light their bodies

Roseate glistened;

Deftly, then, they girdled their loins with garlands,  
Linked with leaves luxuriant limb and shoulder;  
On their breasts they bruised the red blood of roses  
    Fresh from the garden.

She of orange hair was the Nymph Euxanthis,  
And the lilac-tressed were Iphis and Io;  
How they laughed, relating at length their ease in  
    Evading the Satyr.

## Aphrodite's Doves

*W*hen the drifting gray of the vesper shadow  
Dimmed their upward path through the midmost  
azure,  
And the length of night overtook them distant  
Far from Olympus;

Far away from splendor and joy of Paphos,  
From the voice and smile of their peerless Mistress,  
Back to whom their truant wings were in rapture  
Speeding belated;

Chilled at heart and grieving they drooped their pinions,  
Circled slowly, dipping in flight toward Lesbos,  
Down through dusk that darkened on Mitylene's  
Columns of marble;

Down through glory wan of the fading sunset,  
Veering ever toward the abode of Sappho,  
Toward my home, the fane of the glad devoted  
Slave of the Goddess;

Soon they gained the tile of my roof and rested,  
Slipped their heads beneath their wings while I watched  
them  
Sink to sleep and dreams, in the warm and drowsy  
Night of midsummer.

## Anacreon's Song

*G*olden-throned Muse, sing the song that in olden  
Days was sung of love and delight in Teos,  
In the goodly land of the lovely women:  
Strains that in other

Years the hoary bard with the youthful fancy  
Set to mirthful stir of flutes, when the dancing  
Nymphs that poured the wine for the poet's banquet  
Mixed it with kisses;

Sing the song while I, in the arms of Atthis,  
Seal her lips to mine with a lover's fervor,  
Breathe her breath and drink her sighs to the honeyed  
Lull of the melics.

## The Daughter of Cyprus

*D*reaming I spake with the Daughter of Cyprus,  
Heard the languor soft of her voice, the blended  
Suave accord of tones interfused with laughter  
Low and desireful;

Dreaming saw her dread ineffable beauty,  
Saw through texture fine of her clinging tunic  
Blush the fire of flesh, the rose of her body,  
Radiant, blinding;

Saw through filmy meshes the melting lovely  
Flow of line, the exquisite curves, whence piercing  
Rapture reached with tangible touch to thrill me,  
Almost to slay me;

Saw the gleaming foot, and the golden sandal  
Held by straps of Lydian work thrice doubled  
Over the instep's arch, and up the rounded  
Dazzling ankle;

Saw the charms that shimmered from knee to shoulder,  
Hint of hues, than milk or the snowdrift whiter;  
Secret grace, the shrine of the soul of passion,  
Glow that consumed me;

Saw the gathered mass of her xanthic tresses,  
Mitra-bound, escape from the clasping fillet,  
Float and shine as clouds in the sunset splendor,  
Mists in the dawn-fire;

Saw the face immortal, and daring greatly,  
Raised my eyes to hers of unfathomed azure,  
Drank their world's desire, their limitless longing,  
Swooned and was nothing.

## The Distaff

Come, ye dainty Graces and lovely Muses,  
Rosy-armed and pure and with fairest tresses,  
Come from groves on Helicon's hill where murmur  
Founts that are holy;

Come with dancing step and with lips harmonic,  
Gather near and view my ivory distaff,  
Gift from Cos my brother Charaxus brought me,  
Sailing from Egypt;

Sailing back to Lesbos from far Naucratis,  
From the seven mouths of the Nile and Egypt  
Up the blue Ægean, the island-dotted  
Ocean of Hellas;

Choicest wool alone will I spin for fabrics,  
Winding reel with threads for the cloths as fleecy,  
Soft and fine as they bring from far Phoea,  
Sidon or Sardis;

While I weave my thought shall engird the giver,  
Whether here, or far on the sea, or resting  
Couched in shady courts with the lovely garland  
Girls of Naucratis.

## The Sleep Wind

Softer than mists o'er the pale green of waters,  
O'er the charmed sea, shod with sandals of shadow  
Comes the warm sleep wind of Argolis, floating  
Garlands of fragrance;

Comes the sweet wind by the still hours attended,  
Touching tired lids on the shores dim with distance,  
Ever its way toward the headland of Lesbos,  
Toward Mitylene.

Faintly one fair star of evening enkindles  
On the dusk afar its lone fire Ætean,  
Shining serene till the darkness will deepen  
Others to splendor;

Bringing ineffable peace, and the gladsome  
Return with the night of all things that morning  
Ruthlessly parted, the child to its mother,  
Lover to lover.

From the marble court of rose-crowned companions,  
All alone my feet again seek the little  
Theatre pledged to the Muse, now deserted,  
Facing the surges;

Where the carved Pan-heads that laugh down the gentle  
Slope of broad steps to the refluant ripple,  
Flute from their thin pipes the dithyrambs deathless,  
Songs all unuttered.

Empty each seat where my girl friends acclaimed me,  
Poets with names on the tiered stone engraven,  
Over whose verge blooms the apple tree, drifting  
Perfume and petals;

Gone Telesippa and tender Gyrinno,  
Anactoria, woman divine; Atthis,  
Subtlest of soul, fair Damophyla, Dica,

Maids of the Muses.

Here an hour past soul-enraptured they listened  
While my rapt heart breathed its pæan impassioned,  
Chanted its wild prayer to thee, Aphrodite,  
    Daughter of Cyprus;

Now to their homes are they gone in the city,  
Pensive to dream limb-relaxed while the languid  
Slaves come and lift from the tresses they loosen,  
    Flowers that have faded.

Thou alone, Sappho, art sole with the silence,  
Sole with night and dreams that are darkness, weaving  
Thoughts that are sighs from the heart and their meaning  
    Vague as the shadow;

When the great silence shall come to thee, sad one,  
Men that forget shall remember thy music,  
Murmur thy name that shall steal on their passion  
    Soft as the sleep wind.



## The Reproach

*K*ypris, hear my prayer to thee and the Nereids!  
Safely bring the ship of my brother homewards,  
Bring him back unharmed to the heart that loves  
him,  
Throbbing remorseful;

Fair Immortal, banish from mind, I pray thee,  
Every discord's hint that of yore estranged us;  
Grant that never again dissension's hateful  
Wrangle shall part us;

May he never in days to come remember  
Keen reproach of mine that had grieved him sorely;  
Words that broke my very heart when I heard them  
Uttered by others;

Words that wounded deep and recurring often,  
Bowed his head with shame at the public banquet;  
Where my scorn, amid festal joy and laughter,  
Sharpened the covert

Jests that stung his pride and assailed his folly,  
Slave-espoused when he, a Lesbian noble,  
Might have won the fairest in Mitylene,  
Virgins the noblest;

Open slurs that linked his name with Doricha,  
Lovely slave that Xanthes had sold in Egypt;  
She whose wondrous charms the wealth of Charaxus  
Ransomed from bondage.

Now that he is gone and my anger vanished,  
Keen regret and grief for the pain I gave him  
Pierce my heart, and fear of loss that is anguish  
Darkens the daylight.

## Long Ago

*L*ong ago beloved, thy memory, Atthis,  
Saddens still my heart as the soft Æolic  
Twilight deepens down on the sea, and fitful  
Winds that have wandered

Over groves of myrtle at Amathonte  
Waft forgotten passion on breaths of perfume.  
Long ago, how madly I loved thee, Atthis!  
Faithless, light-hearted

Loved one, mine no more, who lovest another  
More than me; the silent flute and the faded  
Garlands haunt the heart of me thou forgettest,  
Long since thy lover.

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# Epithalamia Threnodes

## Hymenaios

*A*rtisans, raise high the roof beam!  
Tall is the bridegroom as Ares,  
Taller by far than the tallest,  
O Hymenæus!

Ay! towering over his fellows,  
As over men of all other  
Lands towers the Lesbian singer,  
O Hymenæus!

Well-favored, too, is the maiden,  
Eyes that are sweeter than honey,  
Fair both in face and in figure,  
O Hymenæus!

For there was never another  
Virgin in loveliness like her,  
By Aphrodite so honored,  
O Hymenæus!

O happy bridegroom, the wedding  
Comes to the point of completion;  
Thou hast the maid of thy choosing,  
O Hymenæus!

See how a paleness suffuses  
Soft o'er her exquisite features,  
Passion's benign premonition,  
O Hymenæus!

Go to the couch unreluctant,  
Rejoicing and sweet to the bridegroom;  
He in his turn is rejoicing,  
O Hymenæus!

May Hesperus lead thee, and Hera,  
She whom to-night that ye honor,

Silver-throned Goddess of marriage,  
O Hymenæus!

## Bridal Song

*B*ride, that goest to the bridal chamber  
In the dove-drawn car of Aphrodite,  
By a band of dimpled  
Loves surrounded;

Bride, of maidens all the fairest image  
Mitylene treasures of the Goddess,  
Rosy-ankled Graces  
Are thy playmates;

Bride, O fair and lovely, thy companions  
Are the gracious hours that onward passing  
For thy gladsome footsteps  
Scatter garlands.

Bride, that blushing like the sweetest apple  
On the very branch's end, so strangely  
Overlooked, ungathered  
By the gleaners;

Bride, that like the apple that was never  
Overlooked but out of reach so plainly,  
Only one thy rarest  
Fruit may gather;

Bride, that into womanhood has ripened  
For the harvest of the bridegroom only,  
He alone shall taste thy  
Hoarded sweetness.

## Epithalamium

Vesper is here! behold  
Faint gleams that welcome shine!  
Rise from the feast, O youths,  
And chant the fescennine!

Before the porch we sing  
The hymeneal song;  
Vesper is here, O youths!  
The star we waited long.

We lead the festal groups  
Across the bridegroom's porch;  
Vesper is here, O youths!  
Wave high the bridal torch.

Hail, noble bridegroom, hail!  
The virgin fair has come;  
Unlatch the door and lead  
Her timid footsteps home.

Hail, noble bridegroom, hail!  
Straight as a tender tree;  
Fond as a folding vine  
Thy bride will cling to thee.

## Pieria's Rose

*P*ale death shall come, and thou and thine shall be,  
Then and thereafter, to all memory  
Forgotten as the wind that yesterday  
Blew the last lingering apple buds away;

For thou hadst never that undying rose  
To grace the brow and shed immortal glows;  
Pieria's fadeless flower that few may claim  
To wreathe and save thy unremembered name.

Ay! even on the fields of Dis unknown,  
Obscure among the shadows and alone,  
Thy flitting shade shall pass uncomforted  
Of any heed from all the flitting dead.

But no one maid, I think, beneath the skies,  
At any time shall live and be as wise,  
In sooth, as I am; for the Muses Nine  
Have made me honored and their gifts are mine;

And men, I think, will never quite forget  
My songs or me; so long as stars shall set  
Or sun shall rise, or hearts feel love's desire,  
My voice shall cross their dreams, a sigh of fire.



## Lament for Adonis

Ah, for Adonis!  
See, he is dying,  
Delicate, lovely,  
Slender Adonis.

Ah, for Adonis!  
Weep, O ye maidens,  
Beating your bosoms,  
Rending your tunics.

O Cytherea,  
Hasten, for never  
Loved thou another  
As thy Adonis.

See, on the rosy  
Cheek with its dimple,  
Blushing no longer,  
Thanatos' shadow.

Save him, O Goddess!  
Thou, the beguiler,  
All-powerful, holy,  
Stay the dread evil.

Ah, for Adonis!  
No more at vintage  
Time will he come with  
Bloom of the meadows.

Ah, for Adonis!  
See, he is dying,  
Fading as flowers  
With the lost summer.

## The Stricken Flower

Think not to ever look as once of yore,  
At this, upon my love; for thou no more  
Wilt find intact upon its stem the flower  
Thy guile left slain and bleeding in that hour.

So ruthless shepherds crush beneath their feet  
The hill flower blooming in the summer heat;  
The hyacinth whose purple heart is found  
Left bruised and dead, to darken on the ground.

## Death

*D*eath is an evil; so the Gods decree,  
So they have judged, and such must rightly be  
Our mortal view; for they who dwell on high  
Had never lived, had it been good to die.

And so the poet's house should never know  
Of tears and lamentations any show;  
Such things befit not us who deathless sing  
Of love and beauty, gladness and the spring.

No hint of grief should mar the features of  
Our dreams of endless beauty, lasting love;  
For they reflect the joy inviolate,  
Eternal calm that fronts whatever fate.

Clëis, my darling, grieve no more, I pray!  
Let wandering winds thy sorrow bear away,  
And all our care; my daughter, let thy smile  
Shine through thy tears and gladden me the while.

## Persephone

*I* saw a tender maiden plucking flowers  
Once, long ago, in the bright morning hours;  
And then from heaven I saw a sudden cloud  
Fall swift and dark, and heard her cry aloud.

Again I looked, but from my open door  
My anxious eyes espied the maid no more;  
The cloud had vanished, bearing her away  
To underlands beyond the smiling day.

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# Partheneia Didaktika

## Maidenhood

*D*o I long for maidenhood?  
Do I long for days  
When upon the mountain slope  
I would stand and gaze  
Over the Ægean's blue  
Melting into mist,  
Ere with love my virgin lips  
Cercolas had kissed?

Maidenhood, O maidenhood,  
Whither hast thou flown?  
*To a land beyond the sea  
Thou hast never known.*  
Maidenhood, O maidenhood,  
Wilt return to me?  
*Never will my bloom again  
Give its grace to thee.*

Now the autumn skies are low,  
Youth and summer sped;  
Shepherd hills are far away,  
Cercolas is dead.  
Mitylene's marble courts  
Echo with my name;—  
Maidenhood, we never dreamed,  
Long ago of fame.

## Ever Maiden

*I* shall be ever maiden,  
Ever the little child,  
In my passionate quest for the lovely,  
By earth's glad wonder beguiled.

I shall be ever maiden,  
Standing in soul apart,  
For the Gods give the secret of beauty  
Alone to the virgin heart.

## Clëis

*D*aughter of mine, so fair,  
With a form like a golden flower,  
Wherefore thy pensive air  
And the dreams in the myrtle bower?

Clëis, beloved, thy eyes  
That are turned from my gaze, thy hand  
That trembles so, I prize  
More than all the Lydian land;

More than the lovely hills  
With the Lesbian olive crowned;—  
Tell me, darling, what ills  
In the gloom of thy thought are found?

Daughter of mine, come near  
And thy head on my knees recline;  
Whisper and never fear,  
For the beat of thy heart is mine.

Sweet mother, I can turn  
With content to my loom no more;  
My bosom throbs, I yearn  
For a youth that my eyes adore;

Lykas of Eresus,  
Whom I knew when a little child;  
My heart by Love is thus  
With the sweetest of pain beguiled.



## Aspiration

*I* do not think with my two arms to touch the sky,  
I do not dream to do almighty things;  
So small a singing bird may never soar so high,  
To beat the sapphire fire with baffled wings.

I do not think with my two arms to touch the sky,  
I do not dream by any chance to share  
With deathless Gods the bliss of Paphos they deny  
To men behind the azure veil of air.

## Hero, of Gyara

*I* taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner;  
Swifter far was she than Atalanta,  
When through clinging fleece of her wind-rippled  
Garments blushed the glimmer of her limbs.

I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner;  
Lovelier was she than Atalanta,  
When the straining vision of the suitor  
Saw her beauty mock impending death.

I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner,  
All the singing numbers of Terpander,  
Metres of Archilochus and Alcman,  
And my melic verse that glows supreme.

I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner,  
Sapphics with their triple surge of music  
Melting in the final verse Adonic,  
Like the foam fall of a spendid wave.

## Courage

*F*aint not in thy strong heart!  
Nor downcast stand apart;  
Beyond the reach of daring will there lies  
No beauty's prize.

Faint not in thy strong heart!  
Through temple, field and mart,  
Courage alone the guerdon from the fray  
May bear away.

## The Boast of Ares

Ares said he would drag  
Hephestus by force  
From Poseidon's palace  
Deep down in the sea;  
Where he had fashioned  
The cunning throne  
With the secret chains.

He presented the throne,  
Forsooth, as a gift  
To the queen of heaven;  
But Hera soon found  
For revenge on her  
Who had him cast  
From the home of Gods.

For secure in its clasp  
Of adamant gold  
She was held imprisoned,  
The prey of his guile;  
And Hephestus knew  
By him alone  
Could the queen be freed.

But the great God of war  
Made boast of his strength;  
He would bring the forger  
Of metals and tricks  
On high to release  
Hera, and end  
Her enraged despair.

Ares said he would drag  
Hephestus by force,  
But was made to waver  
And flee when assailed  
With a blazing brand

By the dark God  
Of the underworld.

## Gold

*G*old is the son of Zeus,  
Immortal, bright;  
Nor moth nor worm may eat it,  
Nor rust tarnish.

So are the Muse's gifts  
The offspring fair,  
That merit from high heaven  
Youth eternal.

## Gnomics

*M*y ways are quiet, none may find  
My temper of malignant kind;  
For one should check the words that start  
When anger spreads within the heart.

Who from my hands what I can spare  
Of gifts accept the largest share,  
Those are the very ones who boast  
No gratitude and wrong me most.

He who in face and form is fair  
Must needs be good, the Gods declare;  
But he whose thought and act are right  
Will soon be equal fair to sight.

Beauty of youth is but the flower  
Of spring, whose pleasure lasts an hour;  
While worth that knows no mortal doom  
Is like the amaranthine bloom.

## Pride

*P*ride not thyself upon a ring,  
Or any trinket thing  
Of fleeting value, dross or gold.

Wealth, lacking worth, is no safe friend,  
Though both to life may lend,  
In just proportion, joy untold.



## Leto and Niobe

Leto and Niobe were friends full dear,  
The Goddess' heart and woman's heart were one  
In that maternal love that men revere,  
Love that endures when other loves are done.

But Niobe with all a mother's pride,  
Artless and foolish, would not be denied;  
And boasted that her children were more fair  
Than Leto's lovely children of the air.

The proud Olympians vowed revenge for this,  
Irate Apollo, angered Artemis;  
They slew her children, heedless of her moan,  
And with the last her heart was turned to stone.

## The Dye

*F*rom Scythian wood they brew  
The dye whose yellow hue  
Turns gold the lovely hair  
Of Lesbians fair.

So, Zanthis, slave of mine,  
Shall dip the fleeces fine,  
And dye the robes I made  
A saffron shade.

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# Erotika Dithyrambs

## Hymn to Paphia

*I*mmortal Paphia! have I earned thy hate,  
That I should burn in passion's fatal flame?  
Is not my constant service thine to claim,  
My prayer's appeal with praise of thee elate?

Has not my life been one sole hymn of thee,  
One quivering chord on Love's harp overwrought?  
My soul has trembled up to thee in thought,  
Probed to its depth thy every ecstasy.

Are not my countless heart-beats each a vow,  
Of tribute throbs a garland? For thy gain  
The Fates have drenched my soul in passion's rain,  
Pieria's roses twined about my brow.

The virgin harvest of my heart was thine,  
I shuddered in the joy that half consumed;  
The votive garlands on thy altar bloomed,  
My days were songs to nights of bliss divine.

Why try me, then, with torture, gracious Queen?  
Why verge me on this rapture's dread abyss,  
Hold breast from breast and stay the yearning kiss?  
Ah, couldst thou fashion pain that stung less keen?

The throe of Tantalus is mine to bear,  
Beauty that Thetis-like eludes my clasp;  
Glances that lure, that make each breath a gasp,  
And then disdainful gloat at my despair.

Scornful she dwells beyond my ardor's clutch,  
Bathed in an aureole of carnal fire;—  
O bind her equal slave to fond desire,  
Let passion's tingling warmth her being touch!

Come to me, Goddess, come as once of old,  
Hearing my voice implore thee from afar,  
I drew to earth thy dazzling avatar;

Accord the smile of piercing bliss untold.

Ask me the dear suave question phrased of yore;  
    "Sappho, who grieveth now thy mad fond heart?  
    Wouldst win her beauty, she who frowns apart?  
Wild as thou lovest, she soon shall love thee more."

O fair Olympian, answer thus, I pray!  
    Release me from this torment, yield my arms  
    The transport thirsted of her folded charms,  
In glow that welds her heart to mine for aye.

## Eros

*F*rom the gnarled branches of the apple trees  
The heavy petals, lifted by the breeze,  
Fluttered on puffs of odor fine and fell  
In the clear water of the garden well;

And some a bolder zephyr blew in sport  
Across the marble reaches of my court,  
And some by sudden gusts were wafted wide  
Toward sea and city, down the mountain side.

Lesbos seemed Paphos, isled in rosy glow,  
Green olive hills, the violet vale below;  
The air was azure fire and o'er the blue  
Still sea the doves of Aphrodite flew.

My dreaming eyes saw Eros from afar  
Coming from heaven in his mother's car,  
In purple tunic clad; and at my heart  
The God was aiming his relentless dart.

He whom fair Aphrodite called her son,  
She, the adored, she, the imperial One;  
He passed as winds that shake the soul, as pains  
Sweet to the heart, as fire that warms the veins;

He passed and left my limbs dissolved in dew,  
Relaxed and faint, with passion quivered through;  
Exhausted with spent thrills of dread delight,  
A sudden darkness rushing on my sight.

## Passion

*N*ow Love shakes my soul, a mighty  
Wind from the high mountain falling  
Full on the oaks of the forest;


Now, limb-relaxing, it masters  
My life and implacable thrills me,  
Rending with anguish and rapture.

Now my heart, paining my bosom,  
Pants with desire as a mænad  
Mad for the orgiac revel.

Now under my skin run subtle  
Arrows of flame, and my body  
Quivers with surge of emotion.

Now long importunate yearnings  
Vanquish with surfeit my reason;  
Fainting my senses forsake me.

## Aphrodite's Praise

 Sappho, why art thou ever  
Singing with praises the blessed  
Queen of the heaven?

Why does the heart in thy bosom  
Ever revert in its yearning  
Throb to the Goddess?

Why are thy senses unsated  
Ever in quest of elusive  
Love that is deathless?

Ah, gracious Daughter of Cyprus,  
Never can I as a mortal  
Tire of thy service.

Thou art the breath of my body,  
The blood in my veins, and the glowing  
Pulse of my bosom.

Omnipotent, burning, resistless,  
Thou art the passion that shaking  
Masters me ever.

Thou art the crisis of rapture  
Relaxing my limbs, and the melting  
Ebb of emotion;

Bringing the tears to my lashes,  
Sighs to my lips, in the swooning  
Excess of passion.

O golden-crowned Aphrodite,  
Grant I shall ever be grateful,  
Sure of thy favor;

Worthy the lot of thy priestess,



Supreme in the song that forever  
Rings with thy praises.

## The First Kiss

And down I set the cushion  
Upon the couch that she,  
Relaxed supine upon it,  
Might give her lips to me.

As some enamored priestess  
At Aphrodite's shrine,  
Entranced I bent above her  
With sense of the divine.

She had, by nature nubile,  
In years a child, no hint  
Of any secret knowledge  
Of passion's least intent.

Her mouth for immolation  
Was ripe, and mine the art;  
And one long kiss of passion  
Deflowered her virgin heart.

## Ode to Atthis

*I* loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago!  
My blood was flame that thrilled to passion's throe;  
Now long neglect has quenched the olden fire,  
And blight of drifting years effaced desire.

I loved you, Atthis—joy of long ago—  
Love shook my soul as winds on forests blow;  
This lawless heart that dared exhaust delight,  
Unsated strove and maddened through the night.

I loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago!  
With pain whose surge I felt to anguish grow;  
Suffered the storms that waste the heart and leave  
A desert shore where seas but break to grieve.

I loved you, Atthis—spring of long ago—  
Watched you depart, to Andromeda go;  
Then I, as keen despair its shadow cast,  
O'er my deserted threshold, sobbing, passed.

I loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago!  
The thought of me is hateful now, I know;  
And all the lavish tenderness of old  
Has gone from me and left my bosom cold.

I loved you, Atthis—dream of long ago—

\* \* \* \* \*

How the fond words, impassioned music low,  
Sustain the sigh of love's divine regret  
No length of time may bid the heart forget.

## Comparison

Less soft a Tyrian robe  
Of texture fine,  
Less delicate a rose  
Than flesh of thine.

Whiter thy breast than snow  
That virgin lies,  
And deeper than the blue  
Of seas thy eyes.

More golden than the fruit  
Of orange trees,  
Thy locks that floating lure  
The satyr breeze.

Less fine of silver string  
An Orphic lyre,  
Less sweet than thy low laugh  
That wakes desire.

## The Sacrifice

Upon a cushion soft  
My limbs I place,  
My every garment doffed  
For deeper grace;  
From burning doves embalmed  
In baccharis,  
The scented fumes have calmed  
Me like a kiss.

Beyond the phallic shrine  
That tripods light,  
I pledge with holy wine  
An image white;  
Anadyomene,  
Than foam more fair,  
When from the ravished sea  
She rose to air.

Daughter of God, accept  
These gifts of mine!  
Last night my body slept  
In arms divine.  
These sated lips and eyes  
That erstwhile sued,  
Accord this sacrifice  
In gratitude.

## Leda

Once on a time  
They say that Leda found  
    Beneath the thyme  
An egg upon the ground;

And yet the swan  
She fondled long ago  
    Was whiter than  
Its shell of peeping snow.

## Amœbeum: Alcæus and Sappho

ALCUSÆUS

Violet-weaving Sappho, pure and lovely,  
Softly-smiling Sappho, I would utter  
Something that my secret hope has cherished,  
Did no painful sense of shame deter me.

SAPPHO

Had the impulse of thy heart been honest,  
It had urged no evil supplication;  
Shame had not abashed thy eyes before me,  
And thy words had done thee no dishonor.

ALCÆUS

Softly-smiling Sappho, longing bids me  
Tell thee all that in my heart lies hidden.

SAPPHO

Have no fear, Alcæus, to offend me!  
Thy emotion stirs my heart to pity.

ALCÆUS

I desire thee, violet-weaving Sappho!  
Love thee madly, softly-smiling Sappho!

SAPPHO

Hush, Alcæus! thou must choose a younger  
Comrade for thy couch, for I would never  
Join thy years to mine—the Gods forbid it—  
Youth and ardent fire to age and ashes.

## The Love of Selene

*A*cross the still sea's moonlit wave  
Selene came  
Softly to seek the Latmian cave,  
Her breast aflame

With secret passion's ruthless throe,  
Her scruples done,  
And burning with desire to know  
Endymion.



## The Cretan Dance

*A*s the moon in all her splendor  
Slowly rose above the forest,  
Silent stood the Cretan women  
Round the altar.

Girdled close their clinging tunics,  
Made of some transparent fabric,  
Traced the every curve and lissome  
Of their bodies.

With revering eyes uplifted  
To the round and rising planet,  
Soon its drifting beams of silver  
Lit their faces.

Soft and clear its sphere effulgent,  
Full defined above the treetops,  
Steeped in pale unearthly glamor  
All the landscape.

When the argent glimmer rested  
On the altar piled with garlands,  
And its glow unveiled the marble  
Aphrodite;

Linking hands, the Cretan women  
Moving gracefully with metric  
Steps began to dance a measure  
To the Goddess.

All so light their feet unsandalled  
Pressed the velvet grass in treading,  
That they scarcely bruised its tender  
Blooming verdure.

Slowly turning in a circle  
To the east, their voices chanted  
In a plaintive note the sacred

Ithyphallics;

Then they paused, their steps retracing  
Toward the west, and answered strophe  
By antistrophe with choric  
Tones accordant;

With the aftersong epodic,  
Standing all before the altar,  
Lo! the hymn in praise of Paphos  
Was completed.

## To Alcæus

Countless are the cups thou drainest  
In thy hymns to Dionysos,  
O Alcæus!

War and wine alone thou singest;—  
Wherefore not of Aphrodite,  
O Alcæus!

Spacious halls are thine where many  
Trophies hang in Ares' honor,  
O Alcæus!

Brazen shields and shining helmets,  
Plates of brass, Chalcidian broad-swords,  
O Alcæus!

When with winter roars the Thracian  
North wind through the leafless forest,  
O Alcæus!

Thou dost heap the fire and banish  
Care with many a tawny goblet,  
O Alcæus!

## Hyporcheme

Thus contend the maidens  
In the cretic dance,  
Rosy arms that glisten,  
Eyes that glance;  
Cheeks as fair as blossoms,  
Parted lips that glow,  
With their honeyed voices  
Chanting low;  
With their plastic bodies  
Swaying to the flute,  
Moving with the music  
Never mute;  
Graceful the orchestric  
Figures they unfold,  
While the vesper heaven  
Turns to gold.  
Turns to gold.

## Larichus

*W*hile charming maids plait garlands for thy brows,  
Larichus, bring the pledge for this carouse  
Like lovely Ganymede, brother mine,  
And cool from thy patera pour the wine.  
Thy slender limbs have all a Satyr's grace,  
Hylas, the Wood-God, dimples in thy face;  
These maids of mine, beloved and loving me,  
My dreams have made thy Nymphs to sport with thee.  
I heard fair Mitylene's plaudits cease  
O'er Lykas, Menon and Dinnomenes;  
And hail thy beauty worthy of the prize,  
Cupbearer to the council of the wise.  
No noble youth the prytaneum holds,  
Whose graceful form the purple tunic folds  
Can match with thee, when on affairs of state  
All Lesbos gathers with the wise and great.

## Spring

Come, shell divine, be vocal now for me,  
As when the Hebrus river and the sea  
To Lesbos bore, on waves harmonious,  
The head and golden lyre of Orpheus.

Calliope, queen of the tuneful throng,  
Descend and be the Muse of melic song;  
For through my frame life's tides renewing bring  
The glad vein-warming vigor of the spring.

The skies that dome the earth with far blue fire  
Make the wide land one temple of desire;—  
Just now across my cheek I felt a God,  
In the enraptured breeze, pass zephyr-shod.

Was that Pan's flute, O Atthis, that we heard,  
Or the soft love-note of a woodland bird?  
That flame a scarlet wing that skimmed the stream,  
Or the red flash of our impassioned dream?

Ah, soon again we two shall gather fair  
Garlands of dill and rose to deck our bare  
White arms that cling, white breast that burns to breast,  
When the long night of love shall banish rest.

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# Girl Friends

## Prelude

*D*eftly on my little  
Seven-stringed barbitos,  
Now to please my girl friends  
Songs I set to music.

Maidens fair, companions  
Of the Muses, never  
Toward you shall my feelings  
Undergo a change.

Chanted in a plaintive  
Old Ionic measure,  
All the songs I give you  
Are the songs of love.



## Andromeda

What bucolic maiden  
Now thy heart bewitches,  
O my Andromeda  
Of the strange amours?  
Round her awkward ankles  
She has not the faintest  
Sense of art to draw her  
Long ungraceful tunic.  
Yet she surely makes thee,  
O my Andromeda,  
For thy sweet unlawful  
Love a fair requital.  
Joy and praise attend thee,  
In thy keen perceptive  
Taste for beauty, daughter  
Of Polyanax!  
Of Polyanax!

## Euneica

*A*phrodite's handmaid,  
Bright as gold thou earnest,  
Tender woven garlands  
Round thy tender neck;

Sweet as soft Persuasion,  
Lissome as the Graces,  
Shy Euneica, lovely  
Girl from Salamis.

Slender thou as Syrinx,  
As the waving reed-nymph,  
Once by Pan, the god of  
Summer winds, deflowered.

On thy lips whose quiver  
Seems to plead for pity,  
Mine shall rest and linger  
Like the mouth of Pan

On the mouth of Syrinx,  
When his breath that filled her  
Blew through all her body  
Music of his love.

## Gorgo

Gorgo, I am weary  
Of thy love's insistence,  
Thou to me appearest  
An ill-favored child.

Though I am than Gello  
Fonder still of virgins,  
Toward thee I have never  
Felt the least desire.

Yesternight I knew not  
What to do, for pity  
Moved my bosom deeply,  
Seeing thee implore.

Harassed by alternate  
Yielding and refusal,  
I was half persuaded  
Then to grant thy prayer.

At my door thy presence  
Lingers like a shadow;  
Vain wouldst thou reproach me  
With appealing eyes.

Dost thou think by constant  
Proofs of lasting passion,  
Slowly my obdurate  
Will to wear away?

Gorgo, I am weary  
Of thy love's insistence,  
And my strength exhausted  
Grants thy wish at last.

## Mnasidica

*S*et, O Dica, garlands on thy lovely  
Glinting mass of fine and golden tresses,  
Sprays of dill with fingers soft entwining  
While I stand apart to better judge.

Those who have fair wreaths about the forehead,  
Breathing brentheian odor to the senses,  
Ever first find favor with the Graces  
Who from wreathless suppliants turn away.

Dica, Mnasidica, thou art shapely  
With the flowing curves of Aphrodite;  
Eyes the color of her azure ocean  
Washing wide on Cyprus' languid shore.

In thy every movement grace unconscious  
Sways the rhythmic poem of thy body,  
Charming with elusive undulation  
Like a splendid lily in the wind.

As I stand apart to judge the better  
Fair effects that roses add to beauty,  
All thy rays of loveliness concentered  
Sun me till I swoon with swift desire.

## Telesippa

*S*leep thou in the bosom  
Of thy tender girl friend,  
Telesippa, gentle  
Maiden from Miletus.

Like twin petals shyly  
Closing to the darkness,  
Dewy on your drooping  
Lids shall fall her kisses.

While her arms enfold you,  
On your drowsy senses  
Shall her soft caresses  
Seal delicious languor.

Warm from her desireful  
Heart the flush of passion  
On your cheek unconscious,  
With her sighs shall deepen.

All the long sweet night-time,  
Sleepless while you slumber,  
She shall lie and quiver  
With her love's mad longing.

## Gyrinno

*N*ow the silver crescent  
Of the moon has vanished,  
With the golden Pleiads  
Drifting down the west.

It is after midnight  
And the time is passing,  
Hours we pledged to passion  
And I sleep alone.

Anger ill becomes thee,  
Tender-souled Gyrinno,  
Shapelier is Dica  
But less loved by me.

Art thou still relentless,  
Wilful one, annulling  
All thy protestations  
In the fervid past?

Can it, O Charites,  
Be thou hast forgotten?  
Dost thou love another,  
Even now, perchance?

Ah, my tears are falling,  
Yet in my despairing  
Mood I lie and listen  
For thy furtive step;

For the lightest rustle  
Of thy flowing garment,  
For thy sweet and panting  
Whisper at the door.

Now the moon has vanished  
With the golden Pleiads;

It is after midnight  
And I sleep alone.

## Megara

*T*hou burnest us, Megara,  
With thy passions wild;  
Bringing from Panormus  
Such unbridled fires.

Thou burnest us, a supple  
Flow of tortured flame,  
Raging, biting, searing,  
Lawless of the will.

Thou burnest us, Megara,  
Love must know reserve,  
Curbing power to keep it  
Keener for restraint.



## Erinna

*A*ughtier than thou, O fair Erinna,  
I have never met with any maiden.

Such a careless scorn as thine for passion  
Proves a dire affront to Aphrodite.

When with soft desire she wounds thy bosom,  
Thou shalt know love's pain and doubly suffer.

Keep the gifts I gave thee, long rejected;  
Fabrics for thy lap from far Phoecea,

Babylonian unguents, scented sandals,  
And the costly mitra for thy tresses;

Tripods worked in brass to flank the altar  
With the ivory figure of the Goddess;

Where the sacrificial fumes from sacred  
Flames shall rise to gladden and appease her,

In the hour when at her call thy fervid  
Breast and mouth to mine shall be relinquished.

## Gongyla

*I*t was when the sunset  
Burned with saffron fire,  
And Apollo's coursers  
Turned below the hills,

That on Mitylene's  
Marble bridge we met,  
Gongyla, thou golden  
Maid of Colophon.

Like the breath of morning  
Or a breeze from sea,  
Fresh thy beauty smote me,  
Virile of the north.

Startled by thy vision,  
Transports half divine  
Flooded veins and bosom,  
Shook me with desire.

Soon the kinder sunglow  
Of Æolic lands  
Melted all the futile  
Snows about thy heart.

## Damophyla

Old of heart and strangely  
Uninclined to passion,  
Wisdom's vigil leaves thee,  
Proud Damophyla.

Sapphics thou hast written,  
Verses in my metre,  
With a skill surpassing  
In the melic art.

Love's superb enchantment  
Thou art fain to banish,  
Like the virgin Huntress  
Long by thee adored.

Molded by thy tunic,  
Every arching contour  
Of her chaste and noble  
Form I dream to see;

Even view her stepping  
From the leafy covert  
Down the dawn-white valley,  
Stately as a stag.

Long I sued but found thee  
Deaf to all entreaty,  
Till one summer twilight  
Listless in the heat;

Soothed by slumber's languor,  
And my low monodic  
Voice that hymned a paean  
In the praise of love;

Loth to yield yet vanquished,  
As I knelt beside thee,

All thy long resistance  
To my kiss succumbed.

## Anagora

Anagora, fairest  
Spoil of fateful battle,  
Babylonian temples  
Knew thy luring song.

Wrested from barbaric  
Captors for thy beauty,  
Thou wert made a priestess  
At Mylitta's shrine.

Once these flexile fingers  
Clasped in mine so closely,  
Neath the temple's arches  
Thrummed the tabor soft.

Thou hast taught me secrets  
Of the cryptic chambers,  
How the zonahs worship  
In the burning East;

Raptures that my wildest  
Dreaming never pictured,  
Arts of love that charmed me,  
Subtle, new and strange.

Hearken to my earnest  
Prayer, O Aphrodite!  
May the night be doubled  
Now for our delight.

---

# Phaon

## Philomel

*P*hilomel in my garden,  
Messenger sweet of springtide,  
From the bough of the olive tree utter  
Tidings ecstatic.

Linger long on thy olden  
Note as in days remembered;  
Ere the Boatman that knew Aphrodite  
Ravished my vision.

Fatal glamor of beauty,  
Beauty of Gods made mortal;  
Ah, before its delight I am ever  
Fearful of heaven.

Spring in breeze and the blossom,  
Grasses and leaves and odors,  
On my heart with the breath of a vanished  
April is shaken;

Shaken with thrill and regret of  
Lost caresses and kisses;  
Anactoria's memory, Atthis  
Never forgotten.

Philomel in my garden,  
Messenger sweet of springtide,  
From the bough of the olive tree utter  
Tidings ecstatic.

## Golden Pulse

*G*olden pulse grew on the shore,  
Ferns along the hill,  
And the red cliff roses bore  
Bees to drink their fill;

Bees that from the meadows bring  
Wine of melilot,  
Honey-sups on golden wing  
To the garden grot.

But to me, neglected flower,  
Phaon will not see,  
Passion brings no crowning hour,  
Honey nor the bee.



## The Swallow

*D*aughter of Pandion, lovely  
Swallow that veers at my window,  
Swift on the flood of the sunshine  
Darting thy shadow;

What is thy innocent purpose,  
Why dost thou hover and haunt me?  
Is it a kinship of sorrow  
Brings thee anear me?

Must thou forever be tongueless,  
Flying in fear of Tereus?  
Must he for Itys pursue thee,  
Changed to a lapwing?

Tireless of pinion and never  
Resting on bush or the branches,  
Close to the earth, up the azure,  
Over the treetops;

After thy wing in its madness  
Follows my glance, as a flitting  
Child on the track of its mother  
Hastens in silence.

Daughter of Pandion, lovely  
Swallow that veers at my window,  
Hast thou a message from Cyprus  
Telling of Phaon?

## Tidings

She wrapped herself in linen woven close,  
Stuffs delicate and texture-fine as those  
The dark Nile traders for our bartering  
From Egypt, Crete and far Phoecea bring.

Love lent her feet the wings of winds to reach  
(Whose steps stir not the shingle of the beach)  
My marble court and, breathless, bid me know  
My lover's sails across the harbor blow.

He seemed to her, as to himself he seems,  
Like some bright God long treasured in her dreams;  
She saw him standing at his galley's prow—  
My Phaon, mine, in Mitylene now!

## Hesperus

*H*esperus shines  
    Low on the eastern wave,  
    Off toward the Asian shore;

Over faint lines  
    Whose grays and purples pave  
Where seas night-calmed adore.

Fair vesper fire,  
    Fairest of stars, the light  
Benign of secret bliss;

Star of desire,  
    Bringing to me with night  
Dreams and my Phaon's kiss.

## Dawn

*J*ust now the golden-sandalled Dawn  
Peered through the lattice of my room;  
Why must thou fare so soon, my Phaon?

Last night I met thee at the shore,  
A thousand hues were in the sky;  
The breeze from Cyprus blew, my Phaon!

I drew, to lave thy heated brow,  
My kerchief dripping from the sea;  
Why hadst thou sailed so far, my Phaon?

Far up the narrow mountain paths  
We heard the shepherds fluting home;  
Like some white God thou seemed, my Phaon!

And through the olive trees we saw  
The twinkle of my vesper lamp;  
Wilt kiss me now as then, my Phaon?

Nay, loosen not with gentle force  
The clasp of my restraining arms;  
I will not let thee go, my Phaon!

See, deftly in my trailing robe  
I spring and draw the lattice close;  
Is it not night again, my Phaon?

## The Farewell

*B*eloved, stand face to face,  
And, lifting lids, disclose to me the grace,  
The Paphic fire that lingers yet and lies  
Reflected in thy eyes.

Phaon, my sole beloved,  
Stand not to my mad passion all unmoved;  
O let, ere thou to far Panormus sail,  
One hour of love prevail.

Dear ingrate, come and let  
Thy breath like odor from a cassolet,  
Thy smile, the clinging touch of lips and heart  
Anoint me, ere we part.

Phaon, I yearn and seek  
But thee alone; and what I feel must speak  
In all these fond and wilful ways of mine,  
O mortal, made divine!

My girl friends now no more  
Hang their sweet gifts of garlands at my door;  
Dear maids, with all your vanished empery  
Ye now are naught to me.

Phaon, thy galley rides  
Within the harbor's mouth and waits the tides  
And favoring winds, far to the west to fly  
And leave me here to die.

The brawny rowers lean  
To bend long-stroking oars; and changing scene  
And fairer loves than mine shall soon efface  
This last divine embrace.

Phaon, the lifting breeze!  
See, at thy feet I kneel and clasp thy knees!

Go not, go not! O hear my sobbing prayer,  
And yield to my despair!

## Dark-eyed Sleep

*D*ark-eyed Sleep, child of Night,  
Come in thy shadow garment to my couch,  
And with thy soothing touch,  
Cool as the vesper breeze,  
Grant that I may forget;

Bestow condign release,  
A taste of rest that comes with endless sleep;  
Lure off the haunting dreams,  
The dire Eumenides  
That torture my repose.

For I would live a space  
Though Phaon has forsaken me, nor yet  
Be found on shadow fields  
Among the lilies tall  
Of pale Persephone.

## The Cliff of Leucas

A far-seen cliff  
Stands in the western sea  
Toward Cephallenian lands.

Apollo's temple crowns  
Its whitened crest,  
And at its base  
The waves eternal beat.

Its leap has power  
To cure the pangs  
Of unrequited love.

Thither pale lovers go  
With anguished hearts  
To dare the deep and quench  
Love's slow consuming flame.

Urged to the edge  
By maddening desire,  
I, too, shall fling myself  
Imploring thee,  
Apollo, lord and king!

Into the chill  
Embraces of the sea,  
Less cold than thine, O Phaon,  
I shall fall—  
Fall with the flutter of a wounded dove;

And I shall rise  
Indifferent forever to love's dream,  
Or find below  
The sea's eternal voice,  
Eternal peace.

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# Epigrams

## The Dust of Timas

*T*his is the dust of Timas! Here inurned  
Rest the dear ashes where so late had burned  
Her spirit's flame. She perished, gentle maid,  
Before her bridal day and now a shade,  
Silent and sad, she evermore must be  
In the dark chamber of Persephone.  
When life had faded with the flower and leaf,  
Each girl friend sweet, in token of her grief,  
Resigned her severed locks with bended head,  
Beauty's fair tribute to the lovely dead.

## The Priestess of Artemis

*M*aidens, that pass my tomb with laughter sweet,  
A voice unresting echoes at your feet;  
Pause, and if any would my story seek,  
Dumb as I am, these graven words will speak;  
Once in the vanished years it chanced to please  
Arista, daughter of Hermocleides,  
To dedicate my life in virgin bliss  
To thee, revered of women, Artemis!  
O Goddess, deign to bless my grandsire's line,  
For Saon was a temple priest of thine;  
And grant, O Queen, in thy benefic grace,  
Unending fame and fortune to his race.

## Pelagon

*A*bove the lowly grave of Pelagon,  
Ill-fated fisher lad, Meniscus' son,  
His father placed as sign of storm and strife  
The weel and oar, memorial of his life.

Finis.

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